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SUBJECT: GVN ELABORATES ON UPCOMING HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) In a May 23 meeting with Poloffs, the MFA handed over an 18-person list of the GVN delegation to the May 29 United States - Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue (HRD) in Hanoi and elaborated on the agenda sessions that the GVN will lead. Assistant Foreign Minister Doan Xuan Hung, previously a diplomat at the Vietnamese Embassy in Washington, will lead the GVN Delegation and has participated in a prior HRD. We are pleased that Deputy Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh, who led the GVN HRD Delegation to Washington in 2007, will host lunch for the USG Delegation. The MFA reiterated its hope that a "successful" Human Rights Dialogue will ensure a "successful" visit of Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung to the United States this summer and one "not distracted too much by human rights issues."
End Summary.

AFM HUNG SERVED AT WASHINGTON EMBASSY

¶2. (SBU) The United States - Vietnam annual Human Rights Dialogue will take place on Thursday, May 29 at the Government Guest House in downtown Hanoi. Poloffs met with MFA interlocutors on May 23 to review the proposed agenda and discuss the sessions that Vietnam will lead. After a 15 minute opening during which each head of delegation is expected to introduce members of their respective delegation, GVN delegation head and MFA Assistant Foreign Minister (AFM) Doan Xuan Hung will present a 30 minute "scenesetter." MFA interlocutors told us that Hung will review the past bilateral HRDs, as both Hung and DRL A/S Kramer are leading the HRD for the first time. (Note. MFA told us that AFM Hung was previously a Minister-Counselor at the GVN Embassy in Washington and participated in the 2002 bilateral HRD. End note.) Hung will note the developments and Vietnam's progress since last year's HRD. Hung may also note the GVN's stance on core Human Rights issues, although MFA did not elaborate on this and said his remarks would remain "general."

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS "JUST AS IMPORTANT"

¶3. (SBU) During the morning session on "Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and their Implementation," the GVN will make the point that economic, social and cultural rights are "just as important" as civil and political rights. They will also speak to Vietnam's work under the United Nations International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Vietnam is currently preparing its national report to the United Nations on compliance with the Convention.

WATCH OUT FOR RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE SESSION

14. (SBU) The GVN will also lead a 30-minute afternoon session on "Religious Tolerance." Our MFA interlocutors told us that, concerning religious freedom, "there are two sides of the coin" and that if you "want religious freedom, there must be tolerance first." They said the GVN would discuss religious freedom in the global context and hinted that they would raise their perception of the United States record. Although they did not say it, we expect the GVN could raise critically the case of United States - Islamic relations and Guantanamo Bay, the current situation of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and possibly the 1990s case of the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas. They have done this in other meetings, although very diplomatically.

MFA SEEKING TO PROTECT PM ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN PREP FOR US VISIT

15. (SBU) MFA interlocutors spoke eagerly about the Prime Minister's pending official visit to the United States and the need for this dialogue to "set the proper tone" for that visit. The GVN wants the HRD to be "successful" so the Prime Minister's visit will be "successful." It was clear they also hope to "remove obstacles" on human rights, as we know the Prime Minister does not wish his United States visit to be dominated by human rights issues.

MICHALAK